Condescend and Never Lend A Hand

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/32281849.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warnings:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence, Major Character Death
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Jack Crawford
Additional Tags:	The death is not Hannibal or Will, Post-Fall (Hannibal), Post-Episode: s03e13 The Wrath of the Lamb, Murder Husbands, I Wrote This Instead of Sleeping, rated E for the violence, No Smut, So sorry about Jack, internal organs, Fist Fight, A gun, Hannibal's precious scalpel, Hannibal is smitten, Dark Will Graham, Maybe don't read this if you like Jack Crawford, Will Graham Loves Hannibal Lecter, Hannibal Lecter Loves Will Graham
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of Justice and Purpose
Collections:	HannibalFanFicsToReReadOften
Stats:	Published: 2021-06-30 Words: 2,662 Chapters: 1/1

Condescend and Never Lend A Hand

by air_of_the_Waterfall

Summary

Will and Hannibal's final interaction with Jack Crawford post fall. Hannibal is so proud of Will.

Notes

The title is from "Going To Hell" by The Pretty Reckless :)

I don't hate Jack, but I could just see their reunion playing out this way, so I wrote it.

With careful, measured steps, Jack Crawford entered the house with his gun at his side. Deep down, the instinct airily wandering through his gut, he knew that he was going to die here, but he would fight it as living creatures tended to do.

The house, framed in the balmy air of a starlit ocean sky, was ostentatious and dyed gold inside by the living room fire. High-beamed ceilings, beige walls adorned in art that gripped the mind, and caramel wooden floors embraced the breeze from a sliding glass door. The air smelled of sea salt, clean skin, something soft and high in carbs, and the bloody tenderness of meat cooked to perfection. Jack took a long breath through his mouth, avoiding the scent and its accompanying nausea, then clicked his gun to the ready. He could have come with backup, or the actual intention to make an arrest like anyone else would have, but for him, this was personal. Intimate.

In the middle of it all, at home with the elegant lines of furniture that knew them well, two figures embraced: stylish and comfortable men whose names and faces would never leave history's memory. One wore a blue button-up with grey pants, and the other was in a light tie and waistcoat ensemble, though they were both in socks and appeared to be dancing to their own invisible music. Indecipherable murmurs carried rich tones of lust and gluttony. The shorter of the couple, with familiar brown curls now glossy and styled, had his back turned. The other faced Jack and was perfectly posed for a bullet to the head.

Hannibal Lecter opened his eyes.

They locked on Jack with no moment of adjusting or surprise. He had known exactly where to look. Those eyes, the luxurious red of wines and theatre curtains, had once been the wise ones of a friend, but now they had a point to make. Without breaking the challenging stare, Hannibal nuzzled his partner's jaw and neck, arms winding possessively tighter around his back.

The corner of Jack's mouth twisted into a snarl before he schooled his expression into neutrality. Regardless, a hint of ironic amusement snuck through as he raised his gun. The consuming rage he had expected to feel never surfaced. Instead, he was resigned, not yet to death but to where the chips had fallen.

"Hook, line, and sinker," he said. "Chilton said that to me while you were off in Italy. Said that if I didn't go after Will, I was letting you have him. Letting you win."

Hannibal's eyes fell half closed, and he raised his chin to display his smirk. In a single movement, the pair untangled, and for the first time since arriving in Cuba, Jack faltered with a sour wash of uncertainty.

Will Graham turned to face him: smooth, purposeful, and every muscle controlled. It was the kind of demeanor that demanded space on the street, though nobody knew what exactly drew them out of the way. Instincts saw more than the eye, but of course, they could be ignored. Will's eyes were dark and cold, the jagged peaks of mountains shrouded in clouds, and his smirk was more crooked but just as eager. His voice came low and resolute, a far cry from the stammering professor Jack had once approached without a second thought.

“Hello, Jack.”

Hannibal and Will watched expectantly while Jack’s scrutiny flickered between them. Before he could speak, Will continued.

“You aren’t going to kill us.” He glanced at the gun. “You would’ve done it already. Would it be an act of justice, or a crime of passion?”

Jack conceded, voice even. “I’m not sure I can tell the difference anymore.”

Will smiled, leaving Hannibal’s side to pace a few easy steps with his hands in his pockets. He said, “Fidelity, bravery, integrity. You’ve spent your career sworn to a few little words. You’re obviously brave, since you came here by yourself. Either that, or you still underestimate us.”

Will watched Jack, expecting a response. Hannibal had arranged himself over an armchair with crossed knees, looking nothing short of delighted.

Jack said, “I know who you are. I know what you’re capable of, Will. You can leave this all behind. You’re strong enough. Molly and Walter want you back.”

Will huffed. “If you cared about Molly and Walter, you would never have shown up at that house with the Dragon case. No, *you* want me back. And is that because you want to save lives, or because you can’t stand to think that I got away? That Hannibal somehow beat you? That you were wrong? I take it it’s a bit of both. Integrity… You’ve upheld your belief system, your morals, but you haven’t always been honest, have you? You’ve been lying to yourself. You’ve been playing your game very well, but it’s been the wrong one.”

Will’s keen talent had always been a force, but honed by Hannibal’s praise, manipulation, and brutal observational takedowns… Jack’s palms began to sweat around the gun. He was listening, but he also wasn’t dense enough to let Hannibal slip from his attention. The bastard still just lounged there, grinning.

Jack muttered, “Right box, wrong corner?”

Will nodded. “You’ve been trying to save me from Hannibal, but you should have been trying to save me from myself. Not that that would have worked either, but if you insist on clinging to me out of guilt…” He just shrugged.

Jack found himself talking as if Will were the one holding a weapon. “I was trying to be your friend. I’ve been trying all this time. You know how hard it is to balance work and… personal concerns.”

Will looked at Hannibal, and the two of them seemed to fall somewhere that Jack could never dream of reaching: somewhere dark and hot and gleaming like the blood of the freshly dead. Hannibal’s mouth opened, staring at Will as if to devour him. Jack tightened his grip, and Hannibal looked up as if sensing it. He wasn’t the stoic doctor of Baltimore, nor the petty, catty hospital inmate or frigid killer stereotype. There was something complete and

passionate there that Jack had never seen. Hannibal didn't move, but his eyes danced mockingly.

He still hadn't said a word.

Jack's tense stare darted between the two, and he began to wonder if, had he only had one bullet, who he would be safer if he shot. Thankfully, he had plenty.

"Will, you don't have to be like this. I think if we get you away from him for good…"

Will interrupted. "Fidelity, Jack. What are you loyal to? Three little words? Three little letters? You've strayed further from them every day since you started chasing the Chesapeake Ripper. Your wife is dead. What do you have left, Jack? Just let me go and retire. Relax for once in your life and go swimming. Hell knows it did me some good."

He gave Hannibal another of those *looks,* and Hannibal smiled adoringly, proudly with all his wicked teeth, then they both looked back at Jack. Something with the consistency of a scream was beginning to stir under Jack's diaphragm, but he couldn't identify it or what it might drive him to do.
Will cocked an eyebrow. "Do you want to know my three words, Jack?" He took a step closer and drew out the syllables, his eyes like hurricanes viewed from space.

"I. Love. Him."

Shocks of rage crumbled Jack's walls of reason. He saw red. All these years, he had been chasing a lost cause. He'd been made a fool of by Hannibal Lecter too many times. He swung his gun at the unflappable monster and fired, the shot resounding like a bomb in the indoor space. Weight barrelled into Jack's side, and his back and skull crunched against the floor hard enough to knock the air out of him. Nausea hit him in receding tidal waves, but after the shock wore off, he was aware of Will's fists pummelling his face and blood gushing. It tasted of betrayal.

With a throat-tearing roar, Jack flung the much smaller man off him and staggered to his feet, but Will recovered with the agility of a snowboarder. Blood droplets flew, hitting Will's face in splatter patterns that Jack imagined Hannibal might kiss. The image made his rage flare anew, and he lunged forward to strike Will's gut. Will kept dodging as if it were nothing, until he could bolt to the side and kick Jack in the back of the knee. Jack went down again, his gun having long since skidded under one of the couches.

Vaguely, Will's gleeful laughter taunted him from somewhere above and behind, and then lean legs had pinned his arms to the ground. Hands clamped around his throat with punishing force, enough to make Jack's air supply choke and whistle out. He thrashed and bucked his weight, but his brute strength was no match for hands that he now saw were designed to kill.

Jack's skull tensed as blood pooled with nowhere to go but up or out. He gasped uselessly, vision fading in and out for uncountable moments. Through it all, Will kept giggling like some creature out of Hell.

Then, a voice, chocolate smooth and dark, irritatingly familiar.

“Darling, if you’ll allow me…”

Will’s grip slackened just long enough for a needle to send Jack into darkness.

. . .

Obviously, when Jack woke, he found himself tied up. He wouldn’t be able to escape, but he tested the bonds anyway for logic’s sake. Sturdy rope held him to a chair. His head still swam, caused less by the drug or his injuries than the humiliation of it all. He was clearly in a basement, tarps and plastic covering concrete all around to leave no trace of his demise. He knew the drill.

Will’s voice murmured behind him again. “I want you to kill him, baby. Have your fun.”

Hannibal hummed his pleasure and agreement, then they both went silent save for the occasional gasp and cling of lips. Jack grunted. They weren’t going to kill him quickly, and it was unfair to make him suffer through *this* as well. Fabric rustled, and Will seemed to make a point of moaning quietly as he whispered things that Jack couldn’t hear. Of course, they knew Jack was awake, but he didn’t know which of them was taunting him or showing off anymore.

Steady, crinkling footsteps, and Hannibal stood above him looking fucking inhuman. His mouth flushed, hair messy, and posture that of a lion rolling its shoulders to pounce. His eyes were blown so wide that the remaining red stuck out even more in this dim white lighting. They screamed “DANGER” so clearly that the first person who held him as an infant should have run so far away that their shoes wore through. His white shirt was pristine, just as it had been that night in his kitchen.

Despite all this, Jack couldn’t bring himself to feel anything more.

Hannibal tipped his head to the side, always curious and polite. “Would you still like to know the Chesapeake Ripper, Jack?”

Jack sighed. “I don’t think I have a say in the matter. How about you not waste our time?”

Somewhere in the background, Will snickered, but Hannibal only blinked. “Fair enough.”

He set to work removing Jack’s shirt, cutting the sleeves off with a scalpel he had slipped from his own. The metal caught the light, and Jack shivered as reality began to set in.

Hannibal studied him as an artist would a blank canvas, and he asked, “Why is it that you’ve come to our home without backup? Surely you wanted us apprehended? You’ve attacked me with bare hands before. This time, I suppose you felt secure with a gun. That’s hardly any fun, is it, Jack?”

Jack grit his teeth. The basement air had the chill of excess air conditioning, probably so the bodies wouldn’t decompose. He wouldn’t give Hannibal the satisfaction of fear.

“I’m not playing your mental games. I’m not making this more fun for you.”

This time, Hannibal grinned almost fondly. “Dear Uncle Jack, you already are, and you need not make an effort at all. In fact, you’ve spared us a hunting trip.”

He knelt down to lean closer. Will, still out of sight, grabbed Jack’s head to hold him back so he couldn’t headbutt or bite. It was like they were reading his mind. Jack wanted to pass out. He was going to die. He had given it thought, envisioned himself on those stainless autopsy tables just like anyone else who wandered their space, but no one was above the panic of nightmares when this monster looked at them like something to eat. Except for Will, apparently.

Hannibal had won. Hannibal always won.

The scalpel in capable hands carved into Jack’s stomach just below the ribs, working neatly across and down to form an “I” shape. His mouth fell open on a choking, wide-eyed sob. No pain killers. He was numb at first, then everything blew wide into astonishing agony. It exploded from his core until he was dizzy and the tidy trails of blood forming felt like streaks of ice melting down him. He began to watch himself from above. No more pain.

Bella. He could see Bella’s blurred form coming into focus, holding his hand and crying silently, coaxing him safely through onto her side.

“Think of Bella, Jack,” the monster offered. How considerate of him to soothe a patient.

Hannibal peeled him open and brushed ungloved fingers over the glistening surface of Jack’s cooling liver.

“Did you arrive alone anticipating this? Did you find it easier to give up and go out with a bang, if you will, than to accept that your life no longer has any meaning? Perhaps that, in death, I could give you meaning?” Hannibal licked his own lips, then casually severed a kidney and held it up to examine like a new pair of cufflinks.

Jack convulsed in the restraints, screaming inside. There was nothing he could hide inside anymore, was there? Hannibal detached the other kidney, this time looking up at Jack’s face.

“I never did thank you, Jack. You brought Will and I together, after all. How does it feel, knowing you brought this on yourself? At least you had a partial hand in something truly remarkable, but it’s yet another purpose that you have outlasted, that has grown beyond you while you withered away. Allow me to make something very clear.”

He hooked a finger around a section of intestine and tugged experimentally. Jack no longer heard anything in this state, but that was okay. Hannibal wasn’t truly speaking to him.

“Will Graham is his own man. He is not and has never been a rope in your imaginary tug-of-war with me. He is a fisherman with his own lines, the executioner who ties the nooses.”

Hannibal’s voice roughened, his eyes grew wild, and he tugged harder on the desperate coils of flesh. “Will is his own, and when he allows me the honour, he is *mine.* I’ve sunk my teeth in him, and he’s done the same to me. We are conjoined, and anyone foolish enough to attempt to intervene will meet a fate like yours.”

He ripped his hand back, and Jack's intestines tumbled free to dangle.

"Do we finally understand one another, Jack?"

The room was silent but for Jack's wretched choking. His vision was fading in and out for good this time, but the pressure on his head slackened and the blurry shape of Will came into view. Hannibal rose to his feet. Taking Will in his arms, covered in blood, Hannibal guided Will's hand up beneath Jack's rib cage to settle on the last stuttering beats of his heart. They kissed the breath from one another as they tore the heart free and put their past to rest.

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